

JBSA LEGACY

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JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO

JANUARY 7, 2022



PFC. JOSHUA TAECKENS

U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team (Rakkasan), 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), review the terrain during a field training exercise at the Agulhas Negras Military Academy during exercise Southern Vanguard in Resende, Brazil, Dec. 9.

Southern Vanguard 22 completes largest operation between U.S., Brazil since World War II

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502nd Logistics Readiness Squadron provides transport during holiday 'Exodus'

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Military & Family Readiness Center helps DOD members become U.S. citizens

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DOD personnel, families can renew passports online

By David Vergun

DOD NEWS

Active duty, reserve and retired service members, and Defense Department civilians and contractors and their families will soon be able to renew their U.S. passports online, according to the State Department.

The online portal, which became available Dec. 23, will enable customers to renew their passports from the convenience of their homes 24/7 without having to go to a post office to mail their application and supporting documents, an official said.

The requirements include:

- » The most recent passport is or must have been valid for 10 years. It's OK if the passport is expired.
- » Children under the age of 16 cannot renew their passports.
- » The passport was issued more than nine years ago (2012), but less than 15 years ago (2006).
- » No changes were made with respect to name, gender or other personal information, such as date or place of birth.
- » No travel internationally can be made



COURTESY PHOTO

Active duty, reserve and retired service members, and Defense Department civilians and contractors and their families will soon be able to renew their U.S. passports online, according to the State Department.

within three weeks of the date of renewal. The State Department will offer routine (8-11 weeks) and expedited processing (5-7 weeks).

- » Online applications may be for a passport book only; passport cards may not be requested online.
- » Applications must be for regular (tourist) passports only. Special issuance diplomatic or official passports may not be renewed online.
- » Applicants must live in the United States.

- » Applicants must have the passport in their possession, and it cannot be damaged or mutilated.
- » An applicant can pay for a passport using a credit/debit card or an automated clearing house payment transferring funds from a bank account.
- » Applicants can upload a digital photo in the JPEG file format.

Applicants who don't meet all of these requirements may still be eligible to renew by mail or in-person, the official said.

The State Department will send a confirmation email with more instructions after those interested preregister.

Preregistration does not obligate those interested to renew online. Registrants will receive email updates and a customized link based on a registrant's individual email address to access the online portal.

Interested parties will have the flexibility to renew online over a six-month period through June 30, 2022, the official said.

For any additional information, contact the State Department at pptmandi@state.gov.

Signature block pronouns now allowed for Airmen, Guardians

Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

A recent update to the Department of the Air Force writing guide, The Tongue and Quill, now allows Airmen and Guardians to include pronouns in their signature block.

The Tongue and Quill provides formatting standards and guidelines for a number of official documents, including email, memoranda, letters and papers.

"An inclusive force is a mission-ready force, and I'm thankful to the LGBTQ Initiatives Team for helping us realize this opportunity to be a more inclusive force," said Under Secretary of the Air Force Gina Ortiz Jones.

The LGBTQ Initiatives Team, or LIT, a part of the Department of the Air Force Barrier Analysis Working Group, advocated for this change, one of the latest initiatives the DAF undertook to address barriers to service and promote a more inclusive culture.

"The change request was driven by awareness of a restrictive policy that was being used against transgender Airmen and Guardians who were authentically

representing themselves," said Lt. Col. Bree Fram, a LIT Transgender Policy Team co-lead. "It was also important for many individuals often confused as being a different gender in their communications."

This effort was led by the LIT, with support from the Pacific Islander/Asian American Community Team, and the Women's Initiatives Team, other teams of the DAFBAWG.

Master Sgt. Jamie Hash, the other LIT Transgender Policy Team co-lead, also explained that the explicit permission to use pronouns, a practice that is now common in the civilian sector, gets the DAF further down the road of explicitly acknowledging the existence and dignity of non-binary military members and civilians. She added that this change eliminates confusion for people with non-Anglo/Western or gender-neutral names.

"The LIT provided an opportunity to streamline the process for this change," Hash said, explaining that this change was a request she started from her installation's Diversity and Inclusion committee. "It is an example of how the DAFBAWG teams are addressing barriers, collaborating, and

executing solutions in ways that have not been seen before to help Airmen and Guardians thrive."

Official signature blocks should include name, rank, service affiliation, duty title, organization name, phone numbers and social media contact information. Pronouns such as he/him, she/her, or they/them are now authorized but not required. An example is:

Angel Alonso, Capt, USAF (he/him/his)
Occupational Therapy Element Leader
48th Operational Medical Readiness Squadron
RAF Lakenheath, UK
DSN: 555-1212

Pronouns can be placed immediately after the name in parentheses or on separate lines within the signature block.

"A foundational competency of the DAF is to foster inclusion," Fram said. "The use of correct pronouns is an easy way to show care and respect for Airmen and Guardians as individuals and can help the DAF retain highly qualified individuals. Allowing pronouns in an individual's signature block is a simple way to eliminate confusion and promote a more inclusive culture."

JBSA LEGACY

Joint Base San Antonio
Editorial Staff

502nd Air Base Wing
and JBSA Commander
BRIG. GEN.
CAROLINE M. MILLER

502nd ABW/JBSA
Public Affairs Director
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Staff
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JASON WILKINSON
SENIOR AIRMAN
TYLER MCQUISTON

JBSA LEGACY
ADVERTISEMENT OFFICE
EN COMMUNITIES
P.O. Box 2171
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78297
210-250-2052

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Feedback Fridays

Brig. Gen. Caroline M. Miller

502D AIR BASE WING AND JOINT BASE
SAN ANTONIO COMMANDER

Feedback Fridays is a weekly forum that aims to connect the 502d Air Base Wing with members of the Joint Base San Antonio community. Questions are collected during commander's calls, town hall meetings and throughout the week.

If you have a question or concern, please send an email to jbsapublicaffairs@gmail.com using the subject line "Feedback Fridays."

Questions will be further researched and published as information becomes available.

Q. The U.S. Postal Service has a post office on the west side of JBSA-Lackland. The posted hours say the office is open until 4:30 p.m. On Oct. 28, 2021, I arrived at that location at 4:11 p.m. and found the doors already locked.

At least 10 times in recent months that office has locked its doors before 4:15 p.m. Why are the doors being locked early?

A: Thank you for your question! We understand your concern and your feedback helps us provide the best customer service that we can!

The postal position at the JBSA-Lackland USPS is a one-person deep position. On occasion, the USPS clerk has to lock the doors when performing other tasks.

In the past, they would leave the door unlocked and the customer could ring the bell. However, the USPS team found that boxes, tape, and other such items that were labeled for sale were being stolen. In addition, it is necessary to ensure the security of the counter.

In order to address these theft and security concerns, they are now required to lock the door if they are away from the front counter for an extended period of time. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Thank you again for helping us to make every effort to make our services to the JBSA community better!

Q. I recently did a search on the JBSA Library website for a book. The search includes all Joint Base San Antonio libraries.

The search resulted in locating the book at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston. When I asked one of the JBSA-Randolph library staff members to get the book for me, she told me that I needed to drive to JBSA-Fort Sam Houston and get it myself.

I remember doing that some time ago, and the

book was available for me at the JBSA-Randolph library. When, and why did the policy change?

A: Thank you for taking the time to write a Feedback Friday for your concern.

The courier service you are referencing was unfortunately discontinued in 2018. The libraries are not funded for a courier position, so library staff members were spending several hours each week away from their duties to transport materials between the three locations, which negatively impacted services provided onsite.

A difficult decision was made to discontinue this service, but the libraries increased inventories of the most wanted materials at each location.

Furthermore, each library has a process in place for patrons to request any materials or titles that are not available at their desired location. The library, in most cases, is able to procure the item for the patron.

Thank you again for bringing up this concern as I am sure most of the community was wondering about our process change.

Q. With COVID-19 having become endemic to American life, I wonder when service members, veterans and beneficiaries will once again be granted 24/7 access to JBSA gym facilities.

Since the gyms were closed in early 2020, fitness enthusiasts have been left without

access to free weights, aerobics equipment, and basketball courts, and may be a little larger in the waist due to inactivity.

Lack of gym access is particularly disappointing to those who work second-shift, and heading to the gym after 10 p.m., each night allows us to decompress with fewer co-patriots occupying these essential facilities at off-hours.

Running around a track or the neighborhood at midnight poses several challenges and safety risks that make it a poor substitute for a gym.

A: Thank you for your question!

Providing functional fitness to all of our patrons, veterans, and beneficiaries for a healthy lifestyle is our top priority.

The continued pandemic is a driving factor for restricting 24/7 access at JBSA fitness centers. Currently, there are 11 operational fitness centers across JBSA offering a variety of hours to try and meet the needs of our patrons.

In coordination with medical experts, JBSA continually assesses the health protection posture and implements changes to services with customer safety as a top priority. As health protection conditions and mask wear policies are ever-changing, we hope to offer 24/7 access in the future.

Thank you again for your suggested improvements to our fitness facility access.



COURTESY GRAPHIC

JBSA First Sergeant Diamond Sharp Awards

Joint Base San Antonio First Sergeants Council

The Diamond Sharp Award is sponsored by the Joint Base San Antonio First Sergeants Council and recognizes outstanding Airmen who continually exceed the standard to meet the Air Force mission.

Senior Airman Tiffany Leveille

Unit: 59th Radiology Squadron
Duty Title: Diagnostic Imaging Technologist
Time in Service: 4 years
Hometown: Vineland, New Jersey
Senior Airman Tiffany Leveille excelled as the floor manager of the largest diagnostic imaging department in the Air Force, which is usually held by a non-commissioned officer. She managed daily operations for 33 technologists and oversaw 3,727 procedures. While filling this role, she identified a decline in the registry pass rate and designed a six-week preparatory course, preparing six technologists for their national examination. Leveille also provided manpower assistance for the mammography department, enabling 150 additional appointments. As the vice president of the booster club, she organized National Radiologic Technologist Week, which celebrates the vital work of technologists.



Senior Airman
Tiffany Leveille

for their national examination. Leveille also provided manpower assistance for the mammography department, enabling 150 additional appointments. As the vice president of the booster club, she organized National Radiologic Technologist Week, which celebrates the vital work of technologists.

Senior Airman Deon L. King

Unit: 453rd Electronic Warfare Squadron
Duty Title: Cyber Systems Operator
Time in Service: 3 years, 5 months
Hometown: Jacksonville, Florida
Senior Airman Deon L. King distinguished himself by supporting the signals intelligence analysis mission, troubleshooting a network cable issue impeding operations. He traced the issue and rerouted 200 feet of fiber optic cable, restoring capabilities to squadron analysts in under two hours. Additionally, King administered two server upgrades worth \$500,000 in time for a crucial Tiger Flag Exercise. Finally, King completed two college courses, earning six credits and propelling him to complete 70% of his Community College of the Air Force degree.



Senior Airman
Deon L. King

completed two college courses, earning six credits and propelling him to complete 70% of his Community College of the Air Force degree.

Senior Airman Lesly Rivera Marti

Unit: 93rd Intelligence Squadron
Duty Title: Cryptologic Language Analyst
Time in Service: 2 years, 7 months
Hometown: Caguas, Puerto Rico
During the last month, Senior Airman Lesly Rivera Marti, 93rd Intelligence Squadron, performed exceptionally as a language analyst. She produced five reports, briefing highlights to senior wing leadership while also co-leading two agency employee resource group trainings. Additionally, she volunteered for three squadron events, raising \$3,300 for the booster club and helped the squadron donate 1,400 pounds of food to families in need. Furthermore, Rivera Marti led her flight's holiday event, accommodating more than 50 JBSA families. She has exhibited skills above her peers, excelling in both Air Force and joint service environments.



Senior Airman
Lesly Rivera Marti

Senior Airman Kyra A. Miller

Unit: 836th Cyberspace Operations Squadron
Duty Title: National Cyber Protection Analyst
Time in Service: 4 years, 6 months
Hometown: Boston, Massachusetts
Senior Airman Kyra A. Miller produced the first Task Force 3 defensive cyber operations signal development procedures used by national mission teams to conduct operations. She managed 3,500 Requests for Information, analyzing 222 threat characterizations and produced four intelligence summaries and personally discovering new malware strains and identified cyber threats. Miller steered hunt forward mission by revamping the Request for information process, cutting down the response time from three to seven days to 24 hours. She also earned her Community College of the Air Force degree.



Senior Airman
Kyra A. Miller

Request for information process, cutting down the response time from three to seven days to 24 hours. She also earned her Community College of the Air Force degree.

Airman 1st Class Emily R. Lloyd

Unit: U.S. Air Force Band of the West
Duty Title: Regional Band, Flute
Time in Service: 5 months
Hometown: Augusta, Georgia
As one of the squadron's newest members, Airman 1st Class Emily R. Lloyd leveraged her doctoral degree to meticulously research the fiscal year 2022 operational \$538,000 budget and rectified 25 deficiencies, posturing eight teams for 316 Secretary of the Air Force missions. As the featured speaker for the squadron's Air Education and Training Command immersion, Lloyd shared her story with the AETC Command Chief, showcasing career field capabilities, as well as voicing the challenges today's Airmen are facing. This triggered action from senior leaders and yielded a complete overhaul of the squadron's in-processing and sponsorship program.



Airman 1st Class
Emily R. Lloyd

Airman 1st Class Ciana J. Morgan

Unit: 616th Operations Center
Duty Title: Virtual Clients Technician
Time in Service: 12 months
Hometown: Boonesboro, Maryland
Airman 1st Class Ciana J. Morgan led three virtual client technicians in resolving multiple network vulnerabilities impacting 1,600 workstations. Her teams' resolution enabled the continued planning of 124 cyber missions. Additionally, she was pivotal in solving her group's network issue within eight hours versus the standard 24 hours. Furthermore, she stepped in during a mission surge (outside of her career field), installing 325 devices supporting Air Force Cyber's deputy commander, which was crucial to the execution of information warfare coordination. Morgan played a key role in her units' morale, raising \$13,000, facilitating five booster club events, and supporting 90 members and their families.



Airman 1st Class
Ciana J. Morgan



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COURTESY GRAPHIC

2022 Great Texas Airshow comes to JBSA-Randolph

By Jet Fabara

502ND AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The 502nd Air Base Wing is hosting the Great Texas Airshow at JBSA-Randolph April 23-24, 2022, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day.

The aerial event will feature the U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron "Thunderbirds," the F-35A Lightning II Demonstration Team, Tora! Tora! Tora!, and many others. It will also be a key event celebrating the 75th anniversary of the U.S. Air Force.

"After a challenging season and last year's airshow cancellation, we are all looking forward to celebrating the heritage, precision, and professionalism of our Air Force and providing the San Antonio community an opportunity to interact with the teammates and mission partners who are responsible

for making JBSA the DOD's premier joint base," said Brig. Gen. Caroline Miller, the 502nd Air Base Wing and JBSA commander.

The Great Texas Airshow as also including support from all services and is featuring static displays and aerial demonstrations by many military and civilian acts.

The event is free and open to the public. Gate information will be made available as the event nears.

Previous airshows and open house events were held every few years. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the 2020 airshow was cancelled out of an abundance of caution.

The event schedule is subject to change and will be updated as information becomes available. For updates on the Great Texas Airshow, visit www.greattexasairshow.com.

FORT SAM HOUSTON

Southern Vanguard 22 completes largest operation between U.S., Brazil since World War II

By Cpl. Jacob Wachob

40TH PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT

Expanding on their close ties dating back to World War II, soldiers from the U.S. and Brazilian armies stood next to each other with a new sense of brotherhood during the closing ceremony of Southern Vanguard 22 held Dec. 16, 2021, at the Agulhas Negras Military Academy.

"This is a historic exercise for both nations," said Gen. Tomás Miguel Miné Ribeiro Paiva, the commanding general of the Southeast Military Command in São Paulo, Brazil. "The Brazilian army has a storied history working alongside the Americans during WWII and we are proud to strengthen our ties by conducting Southern Vanguard 22. This historical partnership stems from us sharing a commitment to democracy."

Southern Vanguard is an annual training exercise designed to increase interoperability between the United States and its South American partners. During this iteration of Southern Vanguard, the training involved more than 1,000 Soldiers from U.S. Army South, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and Brazil's 5th Battalion, 12th Infantry Brigade (Air Assault), 2nd Division, culminating in bilateral air assault operations.

"The 101st has committed significant assets to make Southern Vanguard 22 happen," said Col. Chip Karels, the training and exercise chief for U.S. Army South. "The Rakkasans have done an outstanding job of being ready to make this a highly successful mission. Their level of professionalism throughout this whole exercise has made for a highly cohesive training environment for everyone involved."

The armies enhanced their interoperability by conducting weapons familiarization, air assault operations and tactical training to include setting up defensive fighting positions, tactical casualty care and medical evacuation,



CPL JACOB WACHOB

Soldiers assigned to Bulldog Company, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) "Rakkasans" and soldiers from the Brazilian army assigned to 5th Battalion, 12th Infantry Brigade, execute a medical evacuation mission during Southern Vanguard 22.

live fires, and urban combat operations. Additionally, they conducted cold-load training and helicopter familiarization.

"It's very important that we train with U.S. soldiers because we are all fighting to defend our freedom," said Maj. Itacimar Brasil, a helicopter pilot with 1st Battalion. "Working together helps us all increase the lethality of our forces and build upon trust."

Karels highlighted the exercise as a key enabler to prepare U.S. Army South in its mission to support and quickly respond to any U.S. Southern Command contingency in the Western Hemisphere.

"The opportunity for the U.S. to be interoperable with such a significant

partner as Brazil gives us both the ability to deter threats and provide assurance within the region," Karels said.

Southern Vanguard allowed both armies to share operational and tactical expertise so they are better prepared to respond rapidly to crises in the region. More importantly, the exercise was a showcase of the strong relationship and professional partnership between the forces taking part during the event.

"I personally benefited greatly from this training opportunity and I know that many of my Soldiers learned valuable lessons too," said Sgt. Victor Rodrigues, an observer controller and trainer for the Brazilian army, with the 5th Battalion. "Something I will always

remember was the brotherhood that we felt when working with the American Soldiers, it felt like family, we relied on each other when we needed help, and that's what families do."

First. Lt. Bear Hatfield, Bulldog Company, 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team executive officer, shared the same sentiment.

"Southern Vanguard 22 has been a phenomenal opportunity for the Rakkasans to hone their fighting capabilities alongside the Brazilian forces," Hatfield said. "The Brazilian soldiers are extremely professional. They have extensive knowledge of

VANGUARD continues on 8

New trailer at JBSA-Camp Bullis morale booster for Vehicle Management Flight

By David DeKunder

502ND AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

After several years of being housed in a trailer that was outdated and hard to maintain, the Vehicle Management Flight at Joint Base San Antonio-Camp Bullis now has a new modern construction trailer with upgraded amenities, which will better fit the needs of the vehicle technicians who work on the installation.

The new trailer, located at Camp Bullis Road between the JBSA-Camp Bullis Range Control building and the 343rd Training Squadron facility, replaces a 17-year-old construction trailer. It sits in the same location as the old trailer, which was removed in early December.

The Vehicle Management Flight, which is part of the 502nd Logistics Readiness Squadron, maintains vehicles used for day-to-day operations and training at JBSA bases.

Matt Arzadon, 502nd LRS vehicle maintenance shop supervisor at JBSA-Camp Bullis, said the new trailer is a morale booster for the five members of the Vehicle Management Flight at JBSA-Camp Bullis who had to work in less-than-ideal conditions in the old trailer.

"The old trailer was falling apart," Arzadon said. "The thing was roughly 20 years old, if not more. It was leaking, the electrical was going out, it was shorting out the lights and the windows were not up to par. This new one is more modern as far as the roof doesn't leak; it's more energy efficient.

"It's newer, it's thicker, it's made of steel, so it's better than the old aluminum trailer," Arzadon added. "In the event of severe weather, it will be more durable."

Arzadon said members of the Vehicle Management Flight were able to set up the trailer to meet the flight's needs. Included in the trailer are a supervisor's office, a room for the four service members who work in the flight and a break room.

In addition, the trailer includes a more reliable A/C and heating unit, which would regularly break down in the old trailer, better insulation, an upgraded communications system and modular office furniture which was retrofitted by



TRISTIN ENGLISH

After several years of being housed in a trailer which was outdated and hard to maintain, the Vehicle Management Flight at Joint Base San Antonio-Camp Bullis now has a new modern construction trailer with upgraded amenities, which will better fit the needs of the vehicle technicians who work on the installation.

members of the Vehicle Management Flight to fit their work stations.

The members of the flight, who are vehicle technicians, have taken pride and ownership in their new workplace, Arzadon said.

"It's a big morale booster for them," Arzadon said. "They worked hard. They took the other trailer apart and moved it so that we could have the new trailer here. They did everything; they took the deck apart, they took all the furniture out and scrounged for furniture for the new trailer. I'm proud of them for working for me. They definitely went above and beyond their job to make their new home."

Darren Silsbee, 502nd LRS deputy director, said the new trailer was made possible through the efforts of Col. Steven Strain, 502nd Installation Support Group commander, who

inspected the old trailer last year after he took over as commander.

"He (Strain) wanted to improve quality of life for the people who worked there," Silsbee said. "It was his top priority. He didn't want workers to work in those conditions."

Silsbee said the new trailer will be a temporary space for the Vehicle Management Flight, as a new permanent maintenance building for the flight will be constructed next to the trailer. Plans call for construction of the new building to start in 2023.

The \$1.4 million maintenance building will include a service area for vehicle technicians to work on four vehicles at one time, two 10-foot-wide, 16-foot-tall garage doors, drive-thru access, a tire shop to change oversized tires, an office and breakroom, as well as a parts storage area.

As of now, there is no building to conduct maintenance for the Vehicle Management Flight at JBSA-Camp Bullis. Vehicle technicians conduct their maintenance underneath a tent next to the trailer. The tent doesn't have enough room for oversized vehicles, which have to be maintained outside.

Silsbee said the permanent maintenance facility will give vehicle technicians the capability to do routine maintenance on vehicles they don't have the capability of doing right now, such as oil changes. Since there is no maintenance building, vehicle technicians can't conduct oil changes above ground at JBSA-Camp Bullis because of environmental restrictions.

Once the permanent maintenance building is completed, the trailer Vehicle Management Flight occupies could be used for future storage, Silsbee said.

M&FRC helps DOD members become U.S. citizens

By Jason Wilkinson

502ND AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Spirits were high and relief was palpable as twelve participants earned their United States citizenship Dec. 15, 2021, through the naturalization program conducted by the U.S. Citizenship and Naturalization Services at the Military and Family Readiness Center at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston.

The group had clearly bonded while going through the course, with the participants posing in multiple photographs with their certificates. There were also some family members and friends present to celebrate the moment.

"Right now, I'm a little bit overwhelmed," said Jung Tai, a U.S. Navy Seaman and one of the members who earned her citizenship. "I think tomorrow I'm going to really feel it."

Tai found the process easy to navigate and appreciated the support she received from the USCNS.

"It's a must," Tai said. "They help us



JASON WILKINSON

Participants gather for a group photo after earning their United States citizenship through the Naturalization program conducted by the U.S. Citizenship and Naturalization Services, Dec. 15 at the Military and Family Readiness Center at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston.

so much, and it's a great opportunity."

Tai is from Taiwan and grew up with an appreciation for the United States. She explained that her grandparents escaped China.

"We know the value of freedom," Tai added.

Her husband is also a veteran of the United States Air Force. She explained that serving the United States was something important to her.

The importance of family was a common theme amongst many of those seeking citizenship.

"This is something very important when it comes to bringing my family, especially my kids," said U.S. Army Spc. Smart Adare.

Adare, who is from Ghana, explained that he has not seen his kids in three years. Earning his citizenship means he can bring his family over.

Family was not the only motivator for Adare; he also has a college degree and intends to commission as a finance officer, which requires citizenship.

"If you have what it takes to be a citizen, you should, because this is the greatest country in the world," Adare said.

Ivan Leitao, a U.S. Navy Seaman, said the hardest part for him was studying for the short test applicants must pass to earn their citizenship. He was also impressed with how the program prepared him, however, and considered the process easily worth it.

"I think if you're serving the country, why not join them, and become a citizen yourself," Leitao added.

Leitao also wishes to bring his parents over to visit the United States, who are excited to visit the United States for the first time.

For those interested in the naturalization process, they can contact the Joint Base San Antonio- Fort Sam Houston Military and Family Readiness Center at 210-221-2705 for more information.

VANGUARD

From page 6

operating in jungle and mountain environments; so their expertise directly built our Soldiers' abilities to navigate successfully in unfamiliar terrain."

According to Karels, Southern Vanguard 22 required an extensive planning process in order to ensure its success. He mentioned U.S. Army South began planning the exercise in 2019 in an effort to maximize the effectiveness of the training.

"Conducting Southern Vanguard 22 is no small task, in order to be successful you have to be very intentional in the planning process," Karels said. "I have to give a lot of credit to the Brazilian Army for the effort they've put into making this happen, they are a major world player and

our relationship with them is critical."

U.S. Army South aims to continue building upon its relationship and interoperability with its South American partners through 2028. For the Rakkasans, the experience they had in Brazil strengthened and forged their friendship with their Brazilian counterparts.

"Hosting Southern Vanguard 22 in Brazil is historically significant as this is the first time the U.S. has held a major training event with Brazil since World War II," said Maj. Geoffrey Edmunds, task force deputy commander, 3rd Brigade Combat Team. "It's one thing to say that Brazil is a partner of the U.S., but actually going out and completing this training alongside Brazil's Army, is a real testament to our commitment to supporting each other."



PFC. JOSHUA TAECKENS

U.S. and Brazilian army soldiers plan and prepare for Exercise Southern Vanguard 22 at the 5th Light Infantry Battalion in Lorena, Brazil, Dec. 5.

NAMRU-SA researchers working on portable sterilizer device

By David DeKunder

502ND AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Biomedical engineers from Naval Medical Research Unit San Antonio, located at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, are working on developing a portable device with the capability of sterilizing medical instruments on the battlefield or in austere environments which will help in the treatment and recovery of wounded warfighters.

The prototype portable ozone sterilizer would enable frontline military first responders, including combat medics, corpsmen, dentists and surgical personnel, to sterilize instruments needed for dentistry and surgery, utilizing a process that would sanitize the medical instruments in a matter of minutes.

Dr. Ashley Dacy, NAMRU-SA biomedical engineer, said the portable ozone sterilizer would be adaptable to all environments, including the front lines, remote and austere locations where the climate is either hot or cold, and could be carried by one first responder since it would weigh

approximately 45 pounds.

Dacy said the device gives first responders or forward surgical teams the capability to perform treatment in a battle zone, remote or austere environment when medical evacuation or dental services are not readily available for service members. The portable ozone sterilizer would have the capability to sterilize both surgical and dental instruments.

“Any kind of first responder will be able to use it and the people who benefit from it would be injured warfighters,” Dacy said. “It can have potential benefits for mission readiness as well, sterilizing dental instruments and other medical devices quickly and easily in remote locations.”

Dacy said the portable ozone sterilizer could potentially save the lives of injured service members because it could effectively and quickly, possibly in as little as five minutes, sanitize medical instruments from bacteria, viruses and pathogens, helping to reduce the occurrence of secondary infections and possibly preventing the deaths of wounded warfighters.

Currently, Dacy said, the military

uses an autoclave, a device that uses heat and pressure to produce steam for sterilizing medical instruments. She said these devices, which can weigh more than 300 pounds, are best suited for higher roles of care and military treatment facilities because they are so difficult to transport.

Fitted in a case, the ozone sterilizer contains every component needed to sterilize medical instruments, including a humidification chamber, a sterilization chamber and a user interface that presents ozone concentration, pressure, temperature and the remaining sterilization time to the operator.

The portable device uses concentrated oxygen to produce ozone, which is humidified and passed into the sterilization chamber where the instruments are placed, Dacy said. The process can also include the addition of water and hydrogen peroxide, which can speed up and help improve the sterilization of medical instruments.

“Ozone sterilization works by breaking down cell walls of bacteria and destroying the protective envelope of viruses like SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) and it can work

very quickly, especially if you add something like hydrogen peroxide to produce more reactive chemicals,” Dacy said.

Dr. William D'Angelo, NAMRU-SA biomedical engineer, said the portable ozone sterilizer would be useful for prolonged care situations in a battle zone, in which injured warfighters would need to be treated for a longer period of time in the field beyond the “golden hour,” which is the critical period of time in which casualties are treated on the field before being moved on to the next higher level of care.

“We are planning in future conflicts that we won't have that luxury (of the 'golden hour') because we won't have air superiority, we won't own the skies,” D'Angelo said. “For prolonged care situations, you would need an ability to re-sterilize your instruments, if you are not able to get resupplied, in order to keep that capability of doing surgeries.”

Research on the portable ozone sterilizer started at NAMRU-SA in 2013. So far, researchers have tested dental instruments in the device and plan to test how effective it is sterilizing surgical instruments next.

Soldiers depart for annual Holiday Block Leave on busy Saturday

By Jose E. Rodriguez

U.S. ARMY MEDICAL CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The San Antonio International Airport was busier than normal as an estimated 1,200 Soldiers departed for their annual Holiday Block Leave, or HBL, Dec. 18.

For many Soldiers, this was their first opportunity for leave since joining the Army. This annual event allows U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence Soldiers, stationed on Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston completing various Army medicine-training courses, the opportunity to spend the Holiday season with their families and friends.

Maj. Gen. Dennis P. LeMaster and Command Sgt. Maj. Clark J. Charpentier, the MEDCoE Command Team, were on hand wishing Soldiers safe travels and checking up on drill sergeants and planners supporting the movements.

Executing the movement of so many Soldiers takes many weeks of planning and coordination between the MEDCoE and airport personnel. Many other commanders, sergeants majors, and other MEDCoE cadre were also on hand to make sure Soldiers departed smoothly.

The majority of HBL dates fall within a departure window of Dec. 17-21 and a return window of Jan. 1-3, 2022, with more than 2,300 MEDCoE Soldiers traveling in planes, trains, buses and automobiles with varying final destinations. Holiday block leave is a unique program within the U.S. Army.

"Maj. Gen. LeMaster and I are happy to be out here being with all of these great Americans," Charpentier said. He added that for many trainees in courses like Advanced Individual Training or the Basic Officer Leadership Course, this leave is their first opportunity to return home after joining the military. They will now return to their communities, in uniform, as representatives of the Army. They are going home as professional Soldiers and I am extremely proud of them."

LeMaster said unlike 2020 when there was initial uncertainty if Soldiers would be allowed to travel using commercial air, this year the decision was much easier.

"Since our Soldiers did such a great job of adhering to mask mandates and keeping themselves and their families



Maj. Gen. Dennis P. LeMaster (right) and Command Sgt. Maj. Clark J. Charpentier (center), the MEDCoE Command Team, speaking with Pvt. Sierra Reese (left), a 68C Practical Nursing Specialist, before she departs for her Holiday Block Leave.

JOSE E. RODRIGUEZ

safe during holiday block leave in 2020, I had zero reservations with permitting leave this year; especially now that the vast majority of our trainees are fully vaccinated," LeMaster said.

To comply with the Secretary of Defense's August order requiring all service members to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, active duty units were expected to be fully vaccinated by Dec. 15, 2021, barring any valid exemption requests.

"What's really impressive is the discipline of the Soldiers to do the right thing," LeMaster said. "When we finally get done with COVID-19 then we will probably get away from the masks, screening, and testing, but we are not there yet."

Pvt. Sharon Sweet, 19 years old, and Pfc. Daniel Montenegro, 18 years old, both 68W Combat Medics, patiently waited for a flight to their home state of New Jersey.

Both had no problems wearing masks, even though they are fully vaccinated since masks are a requirement for all air

travel in the United States. Sweet said she decided to surprise her family by coming home for leave; they thought she wasn't going to be allowed to travel due to COVID-19 restrictions.

"I am looking forward to seeing my mom's face the most when she sees me and realizes that I was able to come home for Christmas after all," Sweet said.

Montenegro is looking forward to seeing family, friends, his dogs and eating a wide variety of foods he has been craving like tacos and hamburgers. He also said, he is probably most excited to see his mom.

"I am kind of a mama's boy," he said. "It has been tough being away from home for the last six months since it was my first time so I am just going to hug my mom and enjoy this break."

The safe departure of Soldiers is not the only part of HBL where engaged leadership is important. Throughout their time off Soldiers are encouraged to remain connected with their units and reach out for any assistance while away and upon their arrival back to

JBSA-Fort Sam Houston.

"This is one of the highlights of my time here because I truly enjoy shaking Soldier's hands and seeing them off," LeMaster, who has been in command since January 2020 and said farewell to Soldiers at the airport in December 2020 as well.

The general said he will consider Holiday Block Leave a success when he knows for sure that all Soldiers and leaders enjoyed their time off with their families and are able to return to Fort Sam Houston safely.

"We will receive them back here in a couple of weeks, hopefully well-rested, healthy and happy and ready to get back to training."

San Antonio is known as Military City USA, and the departure of this many Soldiers along with Airmen, Sailors, and Marines on similar holiday travel, is of great interest to the local community.

Volunteers with the United Services Organization, or USO, offered service members snacks, drinks, and activities at the terminals and their airport facility.

LACKLAND

Blue Rope of the Year says 'building up others' best part of being MTI

By Annette Crawford

37TH TRAINING WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Becoming a Military Training Instructor wasn't high on Tech. Sgt. Cameron Figueroa's to-do list when he signed up for Developmental Special Duty. He thought the job was too different from his personality but his command chief told him, "when you look back you will thank me."

Now that Figueroa's been named Blue Rope of the Year for the 37th Training Wing, it looks like he may have to find his former command chief and let him know he was right.

Blue Ropes are Master MTIs; they signify the top 10 percent of the MTI corps.

"Being an MTI is nothing like I imagined it to be, but in a good way," Figueroa said. "The people who become MTIs are truly the best of the best because I have never been in an environment where everyone has such excellent work ethic and also cares for everyone else around them. It creates this tight-knit environment where bonds/friendships are developed for years to come."

Figueroa, originally from Colorado Springs, Colorado, joined the Air Force in 2012. He had failed the physical fitness test to join the Colorado Springs police department, so he began thinking of career alternatives.

"After talking to both my parents who were active duty Air Force it seemed like a good fit for me and I thought 'why not?' I really love the opportunities the Air Force has afforded me throughout my tenure," he said.

Initially a contracting specialist, Figueroa became an MTI in 2018 and achieved Blue Rope status in 2020.

"It is one of the most motivating feelings to take civilians and transform them in a short few weeks to be confident, competent and committed Airmen," Figueroa said.



JOE GANGEMI

Tech. Sgt. Cameron Figueroa (right) stands with then-Senior Master Sgt. Lorenda Wong at the Military Training Instructor Monument at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Oct. 21, 2021.

"As a line instructor, the best part of the job hands down is the development of trainees. Developing trainees and NCOs alike to become better at their respective craft is what makes this job addicting and truly one of the best opportunities the Air Force can offer NCOs or senior NCOs."

Figueroa said that when he became a Blue Rope he didn't feel that he changed.

"I continued to do the same things I did prior to becoming a Blue Rope which was mentoring and challenging myself and others. Like Chief Master Sgt. Learie Gaitan (737th Training Group superintendent) says, 'There is a reason that you can't see the Blue Rope because it's for others to see you as a mentor.' The biggest thing that changed was I felt more pressure on

myself to ensure I was always doing my part as a Blue Rope and advocating for the correct things," he said.

"Seeing people grow and challenge themselves by earning Master Instructor Badges or Master Military Training Instructor certifications is what makes the long hours and maximum effort worth it," Figueroa said. "Building up others and creating relationships with high-performing individuals is one of the greatest and unique aspects of this DSD."

The biggest challenge Figueroa has overcome throughout his career is maintaining a positive outlook on events that are outside of his control.

"A chief mentor made me read a book about the power of positive thinking. It turned my outlook around about how people/leaders

react to certain situations, and how we let those situations that are already predetermined control our reactions when it should be the other way around. It really shaped how I look at a lot of things as an MTI, NCO and person in today's Air Force," Figueroa said.

While he's had many mentors during his career, Figueroa said it would be nearly impossible to name them all, but every person he's talked with about regulations or how something is interpreted is considered a mentor.

"All of my success at BMT has been because of the peers and supervisors around me. If I didn't have each of those conversations growth would not have occurred and made me better," he said.

Figueroa was initially assigned to the 323rd Training Squadron but is now noncommissioned officer in charge of training at the 737th Training Group Standardization/Evaluation division. He said his experience as an MTI has developed him personally and professionally in ways he could not have imagined.

"I am excited to bring all these tools that the best DSD job has taught me back to my career field," he said.

For those who might consider following in his footsteps, Figueroa said becoming an MTI is one of the most humbling and developmental experiences the Air Force can offer.

"It teaches you it's okay to make mistakes so long as we learn from them, however, we have to be able to take the chance at actually exposing ourselves by trying. If you want to become a better NCO, senior NCO or person in general, this Developmental Special Duty will serve as a launchpad for your career!" he said, adding, "To quote Denzel Washington: 'I don't want to fall back on anything ... if I'm going to fall, I want to fall forward.'"

502nd Logistics Readiness Squadron provides transportation during holiday ‘Exodus’

By Jason Wilkinson

502ND AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The 502nd Logistics Readiness Squadron supplied transportation for approximately 5,000 trainees as they left for the holidays Dec. 23, 2021.

But this year, for the first time, they are providing transportation on their return trip. The annual event, known as “Exodus,” allows Airmen the opportunity to spend the holiday season with their families and loved ones.

The operation is no small feat in terms of coordination.

“It encompasses all installations within Joint Base San Antonio, so students in training at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, -Camp Bullis, -Lackland, and -Randolph are all going home on Christmas leave,” said William Cope, 502nd LRS contracting officer representative supervisor. “The numbers start to climb pretty quickly.”

Since trainees usually buy tickets for their home trip a few days before the

operation starts, the operation does not have a great deal of time for planning.

“Ticket sales continue until about Dec. 14 and transportation begins Dec. 18,” Cope said. “That only leaves a couple of days to build a plan.”

Cope said his team has the experience and ability to handle these challenges, and the benefit to the trainees is significant.

“Getting to go home and see their families obviously helps with morale and welfare,” Cope said. “They know they’ll have a safe, efficient trip to the airport and back.”

Cope is also thankful for the help and cooperation he has received from the San Antonio International Airport.

“They have been so accommodating,” Cope said. “From the meetings we have had, they have worked with us to make sure these trainees get processed, no matter what time they show up.”

For the work they do, the 502nd LRS also has a built-in reward as well: “Some of the most fun is seeing the trainees get on the bus,” Cope said.



JASON WILKINSON

A trainee boards transportation for Holiday Block Leave, Dec. 23, 2021, at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.



Participants hold the American flag while running in the Blue Mile marathon, Dec. 5, 2021, at San Antonio.

PHOTOS BY ALEJANDRA ZIER

Wear Blue: Run to remember, run with your heart

By Alejandra Zier

502ND AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

More than 18,000 runners and walkers came from all over the United States to participate in the annual San Antonio Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Dec. 5, which took them past the city's most iconic landmarks, as well as the most vibrant and spirited neighborhoods.

Live bands and DJs lined the streets, playing hits from all genres and decades of music from start to finish, but the mile most people remember is the "wear blue" mile, where the community honored the service and sacrifice of the American military.

That stretch of the course was lined with images of fallen American service members, followed by community supporters bearing American flags. Each tribute poster

was personally requested by a runner or volunteer participating in the race.

The event allowed both military and civilians the opportunity to help build a living tribute to the fallen, the fighting and the families of the U.S. military. Twenty-one Gold Star families also ran to pay tribute to the service members who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

"Rooting for the racers during the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon as part of the 'wear blue' tribute mile was a whole other experience," said Claudia Luca, a blue mile volunteer from the 502nd Comptroller Squadron at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland. "Not only were we able to encourage those in our community who chose to push themselves that morning, but we able to recognize and remember fallen service members. The emotion was almost tangible. It truly brought a new

meaning to a memorial."

"It was a true honor for my family to not only hold the flag of one of our fallen heroes but to hold the flag of Lt. Col. Bill Schroeder (who I served with) who died saving the life of his first sergeant at JBSA-Lackland," retired U.S. Air Force Col. Kendra Mathews, blue mile volunteer said.

"I was moved to see so many runners come through the blue mile overwhelmed with emotion after seeing the young men and women that gave their lives for our freedom," Mathews added. "It reaffirmed my faith that we have a grateful nation and we will never forget."

Individual strength empowered the athletes throughout the marathon, but it was their heart that took them to the finish line towards accomplishing the mission of honoring the service and sacrifice of the American military.



Signs of fallen service members are displayed along the course of the San Antonio Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Dec. 5, 2021, at San Antonio.

Every BMT flight picture tells a story

By Annette Crawford

37TH TRAINING WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

When it comes to memories of a military career, there is perhaps nothing as iconic as a Basic Military Training flight photo.

The BMT Flight Photo website (<https://www.bmtflightphotos.af.mil/>) is rich with these photos — nearly 17,000 of them. They represent the “first step” as Air Education and Training Command celebrates its 80th anniversary, with the theme: “First Step, First Flight, First Command.”

Tracy English has been the 37th Training Wing historian since 1999 — first on active duty, and then as a civil servant when he retired from the Air Force. He named the BMT flight photo archives after his father, Master Sgt. William T. English.

“My dad was a big fan of the site and of his Air Force life,” English said. “In fact, his BMT flight photo from Sampson Air Force Base (New York) was one of the first ones that were on the site. It also proved pivotal to the collection. A member of the Sampson Air Force Base Veterans Association saw his photo on the site and reached out to me. He donated more than 400 BMT flight photos taken at Sampson!”

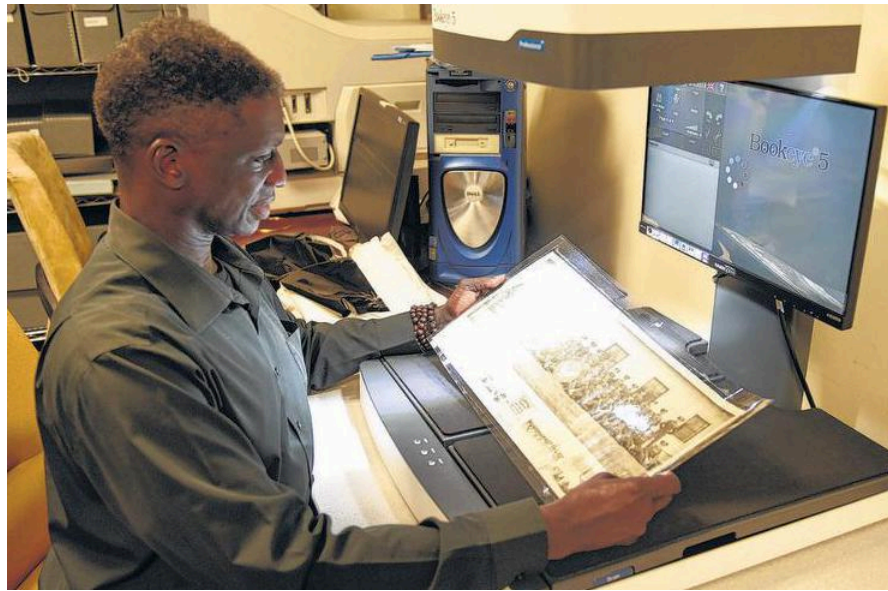
The vast majority in the collection are BMT flight graduation photos at JBSA-Lackland, but the “Gateway to the Air Force” hasn’t always been here. Other bases that have conducted BMT since the 1940s include Sampson Air Force Base, New York; Parks Air Force Base, California; Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi; and Amarillo and Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas.

English said the biggest challenge in maintaining the site is keeping up with the information requests.

“The goal is to get an answer to everyone within 48 hours and to get the photos sent processed and placed online in a very timely manner,” he said. “People tend to get quite anxious once they send in a photo. They expect to see it online within a very short time.”

Interest in the website, which launched in 2004, has remained steady throughout the years, with spikes typically around Veterans Day, Memorial Day and Christmas.

“We can see these trends on the website and how many people are getting onto the site and which countries they are logging in from,” English explained. “Of



Tracy English, 37th Training Wing historian, scans one of the many Basic Military Training flight photos in his office's collection at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, Dec. 10, 2021.

ANNETTE CRAWFORD

note, we have seen people from more than 60 countries around the world who have enjoyed this awesome bit of Air Force history.”

Interest has also piqued when articles have been published in media with a large audience. In 2004, the Air Force retiree newsletter, *Afterburner*, featured an article on the site. Shortly thereafter, then-Maj. Rich Curry, who was a public affairs officer at Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma, wrote an article that was published in *Airman* magazine and Air Force newspapers worldwide.

“Maj. Curry had stumbled upon the site and thought it was great and did not understand why more people were not talking about it! Between his article and the *Afterburner*’s, the office received more than 500 photos in the following two months and another 300 in the months after,” English said. “Needless to say, the weeks became quite long, along with weekends, as I worked to process the photos and get them online.”

English stressed that he couldn’t do this project alone.

“This project would not have moved as far as we have in the past seven years were it not for the untiring assistance of Mrs. Karen Mann,” he said. “She came to the office, saw this project and made it

her own. She takes the time to ensure that everyone who contacts this office receives an answer to their question on this project.”

He added that Mann loves to “take an extra minute” to engage with the people requesting information.

“Oftentimes, vets have a story to tell and when it comes to their memories of basic training either here at JBSA-Lackland or elsewhere, we want to know! There are many, many gaps in our story here at Lackland and we are extremely fortunate that many vets take the time to reach out to us with the information we need to better tell the Lackland/Air Force story,” English said. “To be sure, this project has had a number of very important volunteers who took of their own time to spend countless hours contributing to the continued success of this world-renowned project!”

According to English, the most challenging group of photos to get are from the early 2000s.

“It seems that the older Air Force veteran generations take a renewed interest in their Air Force heritage and are thus readily willing to contribute toward preserving their history,” he said. “That’s not been the case with the younger generations.”

The site has also proved to be invaluable to about a dozen Air Force veterans who came to English’s office for help. In 1973, a fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis destroyed an estimated 18 million official military records. That number included a 75 percent loss to records of Air Force personnel discharged between Sept. 25, 1947, to Jan. 1, 1964. English said the veterans had no way to prove they had served in order to get Veterans Affairs status. Once they found their flight photos, which listed their names, they had the proof to get VA benefits.

“That was enough to prove they had worn the uniform and served their country,” he said. “Their families were so grateful we were able to help.”

It may come as no surprise that English’s project wish list includes: more photos.

“I’d love to get another resurgence of BMT flight photos into the office,” he said. “My best guess is that we still need to get around 200,000. I remain hopeful.”

To see if your BMT flight photo is listed on the site, check it out at <https://www.bmtflightphotos.af.mil/>. For more information or to submit your flight photo, call 210-671-2248 or 210-671-2232, or email lacklandbmt.photo@us.af.mil.

326th TRS celebrates U.S. Space Force's 2nd birthday

By Joe Gangemi

37TH TRAINING WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The 326th Training Squadron at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland celebrated the U.S. Space Force's 2nd birthday with a cake-cutting ceremony at Arnold Hall Dec. 20, 2021.

The USSF was established as the sixth branch of the armed forces with the signing of the National Defense Authorization Act on Dec. 20, 2019. The signing emphasized the role of space superiority in the nation's security.

The first seven enlisted Guardians graduated Basic Military Training in December 2020.

"Since then we have graduated over 300 enlisted Guardians in BMT in fiscal year 2021 — we are looking at an end strength of nearly 500 BMT Guardian accessions for FY 2022. I see about the same number expected for FY 2023," said Senior Master Sgt. Anthony Chua, Space Force BMT Liaison Officer.

In the coming months, the 326th TRS will realign to be the sole location for Guardian-centric training.

The 326th TRS will have Guardian



VANESSA R. ADAME

First Lt. Timothy Mertz, 326th Training Squadron, (left), and Chief Master Sgt. Timothy Pelletier, 326th TRS senior enlisted leader, cut and serve the cake celebrating the second birthday of the U.S. Space Force at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, Dec. 20, 2021.

Military Training Instructors as well as a Space Force section, which will be dedicated to Guardian trainees and led by a Guardian section chief. It will be a trainee's first contact with the Space Force and lay the foundation

for the Guardian Ideal concept.

"It is a lean, agile force which heightens the importance of every Guardian's contribution and commitment," Chua said. "Each enlisted Guardian will learn the basic

foundation of what it takes to become part of the United States Space Force in Basic Military Training."

Each Guardian will receive a total of 21 hours of additional instruction that is specific to the USSF. This training includes emotional intelligence, instructional blocks on USSF structure, ways forward, unclassified intelligence briefings and briefings from USSF senior leaders on military doctrine.

Lt. Col. Nicholas Smith, 326th TRS commander, is the first Guardian to command an Air Force Basic Military Training Squadron.

"I love being in command of both Airmen and Guardians and I will take what I've learned from Air Force BMT and take it back to my home in the United States Space Force," Smith said. "This is a historical time to be a part of this transition and monumental changes are taking place for the Space Force."

Upon graduation, Guardians attend technical training at one of three bases: Space Systems Operations at Vandenberg Space Force Base, California; Intelligence at Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas; or Cyber/Communications at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi.

149TH FIGHTER WING WELCOMES NEW KEY CIVIC LEADERS

The 149th Fighter Wing held an induction ceremony for a new group of Key Civic Leaders on Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Dec. 12, 2021. The Key Civic Leader program helps promote community relationships by fostering friendships, exchanging ideas, and sharing experiences. The Key Civic Leader program helps promote community relationships by fostering friendships, exchanging ideas, and sharing experiences. These community leaders dedicate themselves to learning about our mission as San Antonio's hometown unit and help us tell our story while we dedicate to learning from their individual expertise.



STAFF SGT. RYAN MANCUSO

RANDOLPH

Identical twins share journey to become Airmen

By Randy Martin

AIR FORCE RECRUITING SERVICE

Of the more than 26,600 regular Air Force enlistments in fiscal 2021, statistically speaking, two were extraordinary. Identical twin brothers were recruited by their brother and they attended Basic Military Training together at the same time, in the same unit with both excelling as individuals while on their journey to become Airmen.

"According to public sources, the instances of identical twins in the U.S. is four in every thousand," said Eric Carlson, a marketing research analyst with Air Force Recruiting Service at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas. In an era of reduced propensity to join the military, the uncommonness of Calvin and Cameron Smith's journey begins there.

Before joining the Air Force, in their hometown of La Grande, Oregon, with a population of about 14,000 people, the twins were active in clubs and sports during their high school career. Family members said that they enjoyed time outdoors and helping their great uncle, an Air Force retiree and Vietnam War veteran who lives in Monroe, Washington, as well as their father with projects such as building construction and land conservation.

After graduation, the two opted to stay close to home. "They both lived on campus while studying to become history teachers at Eastern Oregon University, here," said Andrea Pelascini, the twins' mother and a La Grande businesswoman. She said that the transition to college life was working but when COVID-19 hampered the social aspect of campus life, both started looking at other career options.

"Cameron reached out to the National Guard recruiter and researched a few other branches but in the end he decided the Air Force was the best fit," Pelascini said.

So Cameron turned to another sibling to get advice on joining the Air Force. The twin's older brother had recently become an Air Force recruiter. The only trouble was that he was on the other



RANDY MARTIN

Then-Staff Sgt. Zachary Smith (center), an enlisted accessions recruiter with the 313th Recruiting Squadron in New Hartford, New York, poses for a photograph with his identical twin brothers (Cameron and Calvin) and their parents, Dan Smith (left) and Andrea Pelascini, in Airman's Arena at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Nov. 24, 2021, a few minutes after the twins graduated from Basic Military Training becoming Airmen.

side of the continent.

"Cameron started asking me some questions about my time in the Air Force," said Tech. Sgt. Zachary Smith, an enlisted accessions recruiter with the 313th Recruiting Squadron in New Hartford, New York. Zachary is eight years older than the twins but he said their great uncle had inspired him to join the Air Force and serve in its security forces. "I wanted to be a cop and the Air Force gave me security forces which I love to this day."

Cameron decided to visit Zachary in New York. Calvin wasn't as interested but he finally decided to tag along on the 2,700-mile trip from Oregon. Once they reached New York, their big brother and Air Force recruiter elected to be patient with his Air Force-applicant siblings. "I didn't want to pressure my brothers to join, especially if they didn't like it in the end," Zachary said.

The twins considered what their brother told them and both warmed to the idea of joining the Air Force.

"Calvin decided to see how well he would test and he got a high score. When Calvin got serious about wanting

to join, the recruiter side of Zach informed him of all the opportunities," Pelascini said.

They returned to Oregon and Zachary got the call all recruiters enjoy taking.

"Cameron asked me if I could recruit him. I said that I could but he would have to go through the Military Entrance Processing Station in New York," Zachary said.

After Cameron made his second round trip to New York and completed the enlistment process, his twin brother in Oregon decided he would do the same thing. By August 2021, the twins were back in La Grande and ready for the next leg of their journey.

"They honestly were the two easiest recruits I ever had," Zachary said. "They both understood what I was telling them and both were perfect at the MEPS. I did meetings via FaceTime up until they shipped to Basic Military Training. They are both very physically fit and very mature for their age."

The twins left La Grande for BMT at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, on Oct. 10, 2021. "My leadership set them with the same ship date since they are

twins and my brothers," Zachary said.

It was good news for the twins.

"Zach made the recruiting process very smooth," Cameron said. "It was a real blessing."

At JBASA-Lackland, the twins were assigned to Flight 010 in the 322nd Training Squadron. Their military training instructors made them be each other's Wingman, a pairing common in the Air Force that is intended to provide Airmen with a support network. According to their family, it's a relationship the two have shared since birth.

"Their dad would say that Calvin has always been the front guy while Cameron would be in the back observing," Pelascini said. "Calvin is the talker while Cameron is the listener. They always have each other's back. Joining the Air Force and attending BMT together seems like it was meant to be. They always push and challenge each other in a playful but competitive way so I think this experience was positive for them."

TWINS continues on 18

Tough Conversation: Suicide, mental health awareness

By Olivia Mendoza Sencalar

502ND AIR BASE WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Brig. Gen. Caroline M. Miller, the 502nd Air Base Wing and Joint Base San Antonio commander, and Command Chief Master Sgt. Casey Boomershine hosted their "Tough Conversation" forum Dec. 14, 2021, where they discussed suicide awareness and mental health issues with 12 JBSA-Randolph members.

One member shared a recent experience with losing a friend to suicide. Not knowing how to deal with this loss, or with death in general, the member considered suicide as well.

After being told by the flight chief and supervisor to "suck it up," the member reached out to a family member for help to avoid the social stigma of seeking help as a sign of weakness.

"Some supervisors think work is everything and I get it, I really do, but there is a line that we need to understand," Miller said. "We really need to take care of our people by understanding and finding trust, so they can have confidence in sharing what they are feeling and what we can do to get them the right resources to help."

One attendee added how they feel it's necessary to build meaningful relationships.

"We need to advocate for others. We need to say more than hello and ask how they are doing or how are they feeling; a simple gesture goes a long way."



OLIVIA MENDOZA SENCALAR

Brig. Gen. Caroline M. Miller, 502nd Air Base Wing and Joint Base San Antonio commander, and Command Chief Master Sgt. Casey Boomershine hosted their "Tough Conversation" forum at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Dec. 14, 2021, where they discussed suicide awareness and mental health issues with 12 military members and Department of Defense civilians.

The conversation moved to resources available through Military OneSource (militaryonesource.mil) and how it offers a number of ways to better manage mental health via weekly meetings and homework geared toward self-improvement.

Another attendee spoke about the 360 Veterans' Association (360va.org), where Department of Defense civilians and military can sign up for a week-long, science-based leadership course that provides comprehensive,

holistic training in personal health, wellness and resiliency.

Miller let the group know the 502nd ABW and U.S. Army North have partnered to provide the course for military members and DOD civilians along with their spouses.

"Every single person who has attended the 360 VA Leadership course, has come out and said everything they learned was a bonus."

As the conversation moved around the room, the group agreed on the same

thing: work-life balance is a challenge.

The pandemic added stress due to less manpower, picking up additional duties, and working both early and late hours. This only increased issues with home life, relationships, finances, and general mental health issues.

Miller offered words of wisdom gathered from her career.

"When you are with your kid, spouse or friend, be with them at that moment. Enjoy the time that you can be there with them," Miller said. "Work will always be there whether you can get to it or not. Your mental health is the most important, so take care of yourself."

The command team concluded the discussion by encouraging the group to take time off when they become overwhelmed in order to recharge their mental health. They also emphasized checking in with others and genuinely letting them know you are there to listen and/or to talk.

"Don't be the person who steps back, be the person who steps in that could make a big difference in that person's life," Boomershine said. "We don't know what that person might be going through, but a little compassion and an ear go a long way to help them."

The "Tough Conversation" roundtable is a monthly series focused on important, challenging and impactful topics that affect the Air Force and Department of Defense. This series fosters an open and candid dialogue between 502nd ABW senior leaders, service members and civilians of all ranks and backgrounds.

TWINS

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Despite their ready-made support network, BMT proved to be a challenge.

"They called one of us every Saturday," Zachary said. "They were definitely shocked after the first week. I think they were expecting something else and did not realize how challenging BMT could actually be. As the weeks progressed their confidence had grown and they became more comfortable."

Letters from the twins kept family across the U.S. informed.

"Cameron was the first to write," Pelascini said. "He wrote to his dad. It was an emotional letter talking about how thankful he was that his dad had

taught him life lessons and was not only a father, but his friend. He really was embracing the importance of family and the meaning of time. The next few letters were to me and they were information about his daily routines and spoke of the individuals he had met and his positive experiences with his instructors. Calvin wrote to me knowing I would share his letters with everyone. As a mom, I ask a million questions so Calvin made sure to list all the details and write in-depth about the BMT daily experiences. He also spoke of the friendships he was making and how Cameron was."

The twins graduated from BMT Nov. 24, 2021, at JBSA-Lackland. Their mother, father and recruiter had a family reunion with their new Airmen

in Airman's Arena which was filled by hundreds of others who were also seeing their loved ones for the first time in many weeks. There were hugs and tears aplenty on the eve of Thanksgiving in San Antonio.

Cameron had earned acclaim in training for his physical fitness test score and he was preparing to follow in Zachary's footsteps to security forces training. Calvin, with new ribbons representing awards and Airman rank on his uniform, had graduated in the top 10% of their squadron academically and he was preparing to enter the geospatial intelligence career field.

"It was great to go through BMT together because the beginning is stressful and at night we could talk to each other and provide each other

support," Calvin said.

They didn't know if they would eventually be stationed together but Calvin said that he expected their requests for future assignments to look alike.

Their recruiter hugged his brothers. "I feel like a little dad, helping them become the individuals that they are," Zachary said.

After Thanksgiving and departure to homes in Oregon and New York, or in the twin's case, technical schools in Texas, family members said that they hoped to have another reunion around Christmastime in La Grande.

"We are so proud of Calvin and Cameron," Pelascini said. "They are both amazing individuals destined to do great things!"